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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/11/09

TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR KJUS PHUM PTER CO

SUBJECT: Ambassador Discusses DAS Scandal and Judicial Cooperation
with Supreme Court President

REF: BOGOTA 3271 AND PREVIOUS

CLASSIFIED BY: William R. Brownfield, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Supreme Court President Augusto Ibanez thanked the Ambassador for USG support in ensuring a successful U.S. visit for Colombian judges and emphasized the Court's desire for ongoing collaboration. The Ambassador impressed upon Ibanez the need for continued exchange programs between U.S. and Colombian prosecutors and judges to help strengthen the Colombian justice system, particularly as a means for advancing languishing cases under the Justice and Peace Law. Turning to the Administrative Department of Security (DAS) scandal, the Ambassador stressed that the illegal wiretapping of a U.S. official's conversation only reinforced the USG's obligation to press for a transparent and expeditious investigation. Given Colombia's experience in combating narco-terrorism, the Ambassador also encouraged Colombia to help other countries in the region currently confronting similar challenges. End Summary.

¶2. (C) During a November 3 meeting with the Ambassador, JUDATT, Justice Sector Reform Program Manager and poloff, Supreme Court President Ibanez and accompanying magistrates were receptive to furthering direct contact with U.S. judges and prosecutors, particularly to facilitate extraditions under the Justice and Peace Law. The Ambassador assured Ibanez that the USG continuously seeks mechanisms to better assist Colombia, but needs Colombia's input on future collaboration. As a follow-up to their September meeting in Washington, Ibanez expressed his hope that U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor would reciprocate a visit to Colombia in 2010 and suggested that U.S. prosecutors visit as well to observe court hearings. Ibanez also berated local press for the way they conduct interviews with family members of the victims of past paramilitary activities. He stated such interviews falsely depict the judicial system as lacking the will to resolve cases when the reality is judges and prosecutors lack operational training.

¶3. (S/NF) The Ambassador reminded Ibanez that the USG was obligated to closely monitor the DAS investigation, especially given evidence that the DAS intercepted a call between the JUDATT and Supreme Court Auxiliary Magistrate Ivan Velazquez (see reftel). The Ambassador also warned that the Court would eventually have to get involved as the investigation unfolded, notwithstanding Ibanez' hesitance to offer substantive comment. The Ambassador expressed

optimism that guilty parties eventually would be brought to justice, but stressed that Colombia's future intelligence agency should work in lockstep with the judiciary to ensure transparency in potential trial proceedings.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador suggested that Colombia assist other Latin American countries facing narco-terrorism challenges, namely Mexico - a growing USG concern. Colombia would likely be viewed as a more credible regional expert, the Ambassador argued, given its history of battling the same problems Mexico currently confronts. Ibanez confirmed that he had institutional relations with Mexican counterparts, had incorporated them into regional justice events, and would look for more opportunities to do so. The Ambassador encouraged the Supreme Court to seek opportunities for information sharing and offered U.S. assistance in facilitating Colombian-Mexican contact between judiciaries.

BROWNFIELD